

**United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
National Human Resources Management Center  
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Information Bulletin No. HR-2000-135

To: Servicing Personnel Officers

From: Director, National Human Resources Management Center

Subject: Classification Appeal Decision - Supervisory Range Technician, GS-455-08

Attached is the Bureau of Land Management's adjudication of a classification appeal. This Decision sustains the current classification of the position, Supervisory Range Technician, GS-455-08.

Please review all similar or like positions and apply the findings within the decision accordingly.

Any questions pertaining to this decision may be addressed to Mark Whitesell, 303-236-6702.

Signed:  
Linda D. Sedbrook  
Director

Authenticated:  
Darlene Robitaille  
Secretary

1 Attachment  
1 - Classification Appeal Decision (18 pp)

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HR-210

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
CLASSIFICATION APPEAL DECISION**

**Appellant:**     XXXXXX X. XXXXX

**Location:**     XXXXX XXXX XXXXXX, XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXXX, Field Operations  
Support

**Current Classification:**     Supervisory Range Technician, GS-455-08  
Organizational Title: Helicopter Operations Supervisor

**Background:** The appellant has requested an upgrade of his position from GS-455-08 to GS-455-09. Both the appellant and his supervisor certified that the appellant's current position description (PD) is accurate. Interviews were conducted with the appellant June 16, 2000 his supervisor June 19 and the servicing personnel office (SPO) classification specialist June 15. Later, follow-up telephone interviews were conducted. In addition, the appellant and SPO have submitted written background information to assist us in deciding the classification of this position.

XXXXX's SPO desk audited the position twice, December 7, 1999 and again on February 26, 2000. As a result of the two desk audits, the point's values for the various factors in both the supervisory responsibilities and the range technician work changed when the position was re-audited, but the position's grade remained at the GS-08 grade.

As discussed, both the appellant and his supervisor feel the PD accurately describes the appellant's work. However, they continue to feel the position supports a GS-09. Some of the reasons given include comparing the appellant's position to Forest Service (FS) positions graded at the GS-09 or above, the appellant's immediate supervisor is an FS employee at the GS-11 so that it is logical to grade the assistant position at the GS-09, and other BLM offices have like positions graded at the GS-09. We are not able to base our decision on such rationale. By law, we are required to make our decision on the proper classification of this position based solely on comparing the appellant's current duties and responsibilities to Office of Personnel Management (OPM) standards and guidelines.

**References:** OPM General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG), TS-123, April 1993 and written guidance on application of the GSSG for BLM positions; Fire Protection and Prevention Series, GS-0081, TS-108, September 1991; Range Technician Series, GS-455, TS-111, December 1991; Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technical Work in the Biological Sciences, GS-400, TS-111, December 1991; Introduction to the Position Classification Standards and The Classifier's Handbook, December 1996; Digest of Significant Classification Decisions & Opinions, No. 19, August 1994 and No. 20, December 1997.

Attachment 1-1

## DECISION

### Determination of Series and Title:

The appellant's position supports the fire program by supervising a helicopter operations crew of wildland firefighters, and plans and directs activities of both the crew and the helicopter(s) support of the District and cooperator agencies' fire management and resource management programs. He is the primary manager/contract project inspector for the District's exclusive use of contract helicopter and rental helicopters. He manages the District's non-fire aviation program, serving as the initial coordination point and having responsibility for oversight, direction, and expertise for the program's resource management activities. Because the primary line of work is aviation and fire management and requires as a condition of employment, wildland fire fighting experience, we find the position is best covered by the GS-455, Range Technician Series. The position has supervisory responsibilities and title is assigned as Supervisory Range Technician. The organizational title of the position will be left to the discretion of the SPO.

The appellant and his supervisor, and the SPO agrees with this decision.

### Determination of Grade:

Page 3 of the GS-455 classification standard refers us to the criteria for determining the grade of GS-455 positions contained in the Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technician Work in the Biological Sciences, GS-400. Therefore, the appellant's position is properly evaluated using the GS-400 Guide. The GS-400 Guide uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES) which employs nine factors. Because the position is also assigned supervisory responsibilities, the GSSG, which is written in FES and consists of six factors, is applied to establish a grade for those duties. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. This means, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level.

The appellant's PD breaks down his major duties to the following percentages:

Managing Helicopter/Aviation Operations (fire and non-fire)	40
Planning & Coordination of District Aviation	
Program for Non-Fire Use	25
Crew Management (supervision of fire crews)	25
Administration (COR and procurement) (fire and non-fire)	10

Our evaluation with respect for the six GSSG factors and nine factors of the GS-400 Guide follows.

### General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG):

As a major duty of the PD, the appellant is assigned Acting Aviation Manager and acts as backup

to that position. However, OPM instructs us that these responsibilities, which are carried out only in the absence of the Interagency Aviation Manager and is temporary, short term, and not performed continuously, are not included in the classification process when assigning a grade to the position.

#### Factor 1 - Program Scope and Effect

This factor assesses the general complexity, breadth, and impact of the program areas and work directed, including its organizational and geographic coverage (Scope). It also assesses the impact of the work both within and outside the immediate organization (Effect).

The SPO has assigned Factor Level 1-1, 175 points. We agree.

At Level 1-1, scope describes directing work that is procedural, routine, and typically provides services or products to specific persons or small, local organizations. Effect is described as directly facilitating the work of others in the immediate organizational unit, responding to specific requests or needs of individuals, or affecting only localized functions. The comparable BLM illustration for this level includes positions that direct fire suppression crews below grade GS-05 or equivalent and the work accomplishes a portion of the organization's fire program.

When crediting grade levels of positions supervised, the BLM as well as OPM guidance refers to the work of subordinate positions that best characterizes the nature of the basic mission oriented, non-supervisory work being performed and not grades assigned subordinate positions as a result of a work leader or supervisory responsibilities. Although position descriptions for the subordinate supervisory and leader positions were not submitted, we are assured by the SPO that the grades of those positions are based on their supervisory/leader work. Therefore, as required by Bureau and OPM guidance, eliminating the work leader and supervisory grades of the foreman and leader(s), a grade of the non-leader and non-supervisory work that is supervised by the appellant and performed by the helitack staff is typically GS-04.

Organizationally, the appellant's position is supervised by a Supervisory Forestry Technician, GS-462-11 (FS employee). The appellant is a career seasonal employee spending about 70% of his time on supervisory duties during the fire season. He supervises from 7-10 positions, all seasonal or temporary. Base level of the positions supervised is GS-04. A full compliment of a crew as submitted by the appellant for the current fire season is listed below. Organizational titles are used; however, all positions are assigned the official titles of Range Technician and assigned to the GS-455 series.

Helicopter Operations Supervisor	GS-455-08 (Appellant's Position)
Helicopter Foreman	GS-455-6/7
Lead Crew	GS-455-05
Lead Crew	GS-455-05
Fire Fighter (Helitack)	GS-455-04 (5 each)

Factor Level 1-2 is eliminated from consideration for the appellant's position because the work supervised is procedural and routine (GS-04) which does not meet the 1-2 threshold level

of supervising work that is administrative, technical, complex, clerical, or comparable nature.

Both the appellant and FMO have stated that the appellant has up to 100 people reporting to him when he is an Incident Commander, or when he is on a large fire with a Type II or III team. However, these circumstances are irregular and infrequent, occurring less than 25% of the time, and are not considered when assigning a factor level for the appellant's regular and recurring supervisory responsibilities.

In his appeal, the appellant stated that he had not been given proper credit for various projects and responsibilities. The SPO statement that he quotes, "The primary purpose of this position is to accomplish fire suppression for assigned geographical area." is an accurate statement. The appellant's supervisory responsibilities are almost exclusively related to the fire suppression staff, and only his supervisory responsibilities governing those positions are evaluated under this guide. Other standards and guides are used to measure non-supervisory missions oriented work of the appellant's position.

Factor Level 1-1 is assigned for a total of 175 points.

#### Factor 2 - Organizational Setting

This factor considers the organizational situation of the supervisory position in relation to higher levels of management.

The SPO has assigned Factor Level 2-1, 100 points. We agree.

The appellant occupies a position that is accountable to a position that is two or more levels below the first SES, which in the Bureau is the State Director's position, in the direct supervisory chain.

Factor Level 2-1 is assigned for a total of 100 points.

#### Factor 3 - Supervisory and Managerial Authority Exercised

This factor covers the delegated supervisory and managerial authorities exercised on recurring basis.

The SPO has assigned Factor 3-2, 450 points. We agree.

Positions credited at Level 3-2 must meet criteria under a, b, or c listed for this level. Under a, the supervisor must plan and schedule ongoing production oriented work on a quarterly and annual basis, or direct assignments of similar duration and b, require supervising contracted out work. Neither a nor b contains criteria relevant to the appellant's position.

Level 3-2 c offers the most comparable criteria. In order to meet c, the appellant is required to carry out at least three of the first four, and a total of six or more of the ten authorities and responsibilities listed in the GSSG. The appellant performs nine of the ten. He does not receive credit for ten, which requires him to develop performance standards for his subordinate

positions. Because these are standardized position descriptions performance standards do not change from year to year, and there is no requirement to develop and/or change the standards on a regular and recurring basis.

To meet Factor Level 3-3, the appellant would have to either be closely involved with Department of the Interior officials and their program development, or have supervisory controls over a large and complex organization. As stated, the appellant supervises an average staff of 7-10 employees and considers 13 positions an optimal staff. In addition, the grade level of the staff cannot be considered typical of a complex organization.

Factor Level 3-2 is assigned for a total of 450 points.

#### Factor 4 - Personal Contacts

This is a two-part factor. It assesses the nature of the purpose of personal contacts related to supervisory responsibilities.

Subfactor 4A, Nature of Contacts, covers the organizational relationships, authority or influence level, setting, and difficulty of preparation associated with making personal contacts involving the supervisory work. Work with special projects, non-supervisory duties performed, or providing advice to headquarters should not be included.

The SPO has assigned Factor 4A-2, 75 points. We agree.

The appellant's contacts exceed 4A-1 which limits contacts to the work place of those contacted, in routine meetings and within the same organization.

The appellant's supervisory contacts are an equitable match to Factor 4A-2. Factor 4A-2 and the appellant's work requires contacts with members of the business community or the general public, higher-ranking employees throughout the activity, representatives of local public interest groups, case workers in congressional offices, State and local government employees, and reporters or other limited media. In addition, the appellant has frequent contacts with fire personnel in other agencies, the media and general public.

In order to meet Factor 4A-3, the appellant would have to have frequent ongoing contacts with high-ranking managers and technical staff at the Bureau level and major organizational levels in the Department, or with comparable personnel in other Federal agencies.

Factor Level 4A-2 is assigned for a total of 75 points.

Subfactor 4B - Purpose of Contacts covers the personal contacts including the advisory, representational, negotiating, and commitment making responsibilities related to supervision and management.

The SPO has assigned Factor 4B-2, 75 points. We agree.

The purpose of the contacts at Factor Level 4B-2 is to ensure information is provided to

outside parties accurately and consistently; to plan and coordinate the work with that of others outside the subordinate organization; and/or to resolve differences of opinion. Likewise, the appellant's supervisory contacts are to coordinate efforts to suppress fires requires a similar purpose to 4B-2, and exceed 4B-1 which limits contacts to discussions on work efforts, exchanges to factual information about work operations and personnel matters; and provide training, advice, and guidance to subordinates.

However, in order to meet 4B-3, the appellant would have to regularly justify, defend, or negotiate to gain compliance with established policies, regulations, or contracts. At this level, a supervisor must have the requisite control over resources and the authority necessary to gain support and compliance on policy matters. The appellant's position is not delegated this level of authority.

Factor Level 4B-2 is assigned for a total of 75 points.

#### Factor 5 - Difficulty of Typical Work Directed

This factor measures the difficulty and complexity of the basic work most typical of the organization directed, including other line, staff, or contracted work either directly or through subordinate supervisors, team leaders, or others.

The SPO has assigned Factor 5-2, 205 points. We agree.

The basic mission oriented non-supervisory and non-leader work performed or overseen which constitutes 25 percent or more of the workload of the appellant's organization directed is firefighting activity assigned to the GS-04. Supervisory positions having the highest level of base work at GS-03 or GS-04 or equivalent are assigned Factor Level 5-2.

In his appeal, the appellant disputes the base level assignment of GS-04. He lists a crew of eight at the time of his SPO desk audit which consisted of a crew supervisor, GS-6/7; two lead crew members, GS-5; and four crew members, GS-04, which is similar to the current organization listed in Factor 1 above and submitted for this appeal. As discussed, OPM guidance does not allow grades of subordinate employees that are based on supervisory or leader responsibilities to be used when assigning a base level for this factor.

In addition, the SPO of the National Office of Fire and Aviation Office confirmed the GS-04 base level for this position.

Factor level 5-2 is assigned for a total of 205 points.

#### Factor 6 - Other Conditions

This factor measures the extent to which various conditions contribute to the difficulty and complexity of carrying out supervisory duties, authorities, and responsibilities.

The SPO has assigned Factor 6-1, 310 points. We agree.

At Factor Level 6-1, the work supervised or overseen involves clerical, technical or other work comparable in difficulty to the GS-06 level, or lower. Since the appellant supervises a crew that performs work comparable to GS-04, it is assigned to this level.

In order to meet Factor Level 6-2, the work supervised needs to meet the GS-7 or 8 levels, or work at the GS-4, 5 or 6 level for which the supervisor has full and final technical authority over the work. Full and final technical authority means that the supervisor is responsible for all technical determinations arising from the work, without technical advice or assistance on even the more difficult and unusual problems, and without further review accept from an administrative or program evaluation standpoint. Credit for this is limited to situations involving an extraordinary degree of finality in technical decision making.

The appellant does not have an extraordinary degree for finality of technical decision making. His supervisor is the Aviation Manager who is cognizant of the operations and services, and although the appellant often functions independently in the field, there is no evidence he makes all technical determinations, including those involving the more difficult and unusual problems without advice and assistance from the supervisor.

The second condition under which Factor Level 6-2 may be assigned involves positions that direct *subordinate supervisors* (not work leaders) of work comparable to GS-06 or lower, where coordinating the work of the subordinate units (more than one unit) requires a continuing effort to assure quality and service standards, limited to matters of timeliness, form, procedure, accuracy, and quantity. Supervisors are defined in the GSSG as a position or employee that accomplishes work through the direction of other people and meets at least the minimum requirements for coverage under this guide. According to the organization's staffing charts, the appellant has one subordinate supervisor (foreman), and crews leads (two), both of which qualify as work leaders but not supervisors.

In order to qualify under this condition, more than one subordinate supervisor is required. Since the appellant has one subordinate supervisor who assists him in the supervision of District helicopter operation fire crews, each with a crew (or work) leader, this condition is not met.

The GSSG stipulates that if Factor Level 6-1, 6-2, or 6-3 is initially selected, the special situations section is cross-referenced to determine if there are any additional strengthening factors which may impact the rating. At least three of the eight special situations must be met in order to add one level.

### Special Situations

#### 1. Variety of Work:

Credit is given when more than one kind of work, each kind representing a requirement for a



distinctly different additional body of knowledge on the part of the supervisor, is present in the work of the unit.

Since the appellant and his staff are all assigned to the GS-455, Range Technician series because of the staff's fire fighting activities, credit is not assigned for variety.

## 2. Shift Operations:

Credit is given for this situation when the position supervises an operation carried out on at least two fully staffed shifts.

The appellant does not supervise shift operations and therefore, shift operation is not credited.

## 3. Fluctuating Work Force or Constantly Changing Deadlines:

Credit fluctuating work force when the workforce supervised by the position has large fluctuations in size (e.g., when there are significant seasonal variations in staff) and these fluctuations impose on the supervisor a substantially greater responsibility for training, adjusting assignments, or maintaining a smooth flow of work while absorbing and releasing employees.

As discussed, both the appellant and FMO have stated that the appellant has up to 100 people reporting to him when he is an Incident Commander, or when he is on a large fire with a Type II or III team. However, these circumstances are irregular and infrequent, occurring less than 25% of the time and cannot be defined as a regular and continuing supervisory assignment.

The appellant supervises a foreman (subordinate supervisor), two work leaders, and a firefighter staff for total subordinate positions that generally varies between 7 and 10. His anticipated subordinate staff for this fire season is 13 of which 10 are GS-04 firefighter positions.

His subordinate foremen (supervisor) and two work leaders share or assume responsibility for training and/or adjusting assignments. Maintaining a smooth flow of work while absorbing and releasing employees is not particularly difficult. Seasonal employees are brought on board before the fire season and releasing and losing employees during the season may require additional coordination in hiring, detailing, or reassigning employees, but it would not impose any special requirements. The fluctuations that occur are typically in the GS-04 firefighter staffs that vary from 2 or 3 to up to 5 positions. These numbers do not constitute large fluctuations in size of the staff, or otherwise impose special requirements on the appellant that is not previously credited under Factor 3 - Supervisory and Managerial Authority Exercised.

Credit constantly changing deadlines when frequent, abrupt, and unexpected changes in work assignments, goals, and deadlines require the supervisor to constantly to adjust operations under the pressure of continuously changing and unpredictable conditions.

While it is accurate to assume that fire seasons have beginning and ending dates,

individual wildland fires do not, which is the nature of day to day wildland fire suppression activities. The appellant's staff is hired before and during the fire season for fire suppression activities and intrinsic to such work are continuous changes and unpredictable conditions. However, it does not follow that under these conditions, fire suppression activities require frequent, abrupt, and unexpected changes in work assignments, goals, and deadlines. Put simply, fire crews are hired to contain wildland fires when fires occur. There are no deadlines that need to be changed for frequent, abrupt, and unexpected changes in work assignments, goals, and deadlines. Therefore, the appellant's position does not meet the intent envisioned for this factor. No credit is given.

#### 4. Physical Dispersion:

Credit this situation when a substantial portion of the workload for which the supervisor is responsible is regularly carried out at one or more locations which are physically removed from the main unit under conditions which make day-to-day supervision difficult to administer.

The appellant and all subordinate positions are duty stationed in Boise. In addition, the appellant has a subordinate Helicopter Foreman (supervisor) performing supervision and guidance. He also has subordinate work leaders who are responsible for on-site day to day work and work adjustments, on the job training, work in progress, etc. The lack of multiple duty stations and because of the supervisory layering which is typical of fire organizations, difficulties associated with supervising physically dispersed positions is negated and this situation is not credited.

#### 5. Special Staffing Situations:

Credit this situation when: (1) a substantial portion of the work force is regularly involved with special employment programs; (2) requirements for counseling and motivational activities are regular and recurring; and (3) job assignments, work tasks, working conditions, and/or training must be tailored to fit the special circumstances.

Such conditions are not found in the appellant's supervisory responsibilities. There are no employees involved in special employment programs, and the subordinate staff does not require the types of counseling and assignments described. This situation is not credited.

#### 6. Impact of Specialized Programs:

Credit this situation when supervisors are responsible for a significant technical or administrative workload in grades above the level of work credited in Factor 5.

The appellant does not supervise a significant technical or administrative workload of positions with grades above the level of work credited in Factor 5 and therefore, this situation is not credited.

## 7. Changing Technology:

Credit this when work processes and procedures vary constantly because of the impact of changing technology, creating a requirement for extensive training and guidance of the subordinate staff.

The work is not subject to changing technology and therefore, this situation is not credited.

## 8. Special Hazard and Safety Conditions:

Credit this situation when the supervisory position is regularly made more difficult by the need to make provisions for significant unsafe or hazardous conditions occurring during performance of the work of organization.

The nature of the work supervised by the appellant matches the criterion above, and is credited.

Three or more special situations must be met in order to credit Level 6-2. Since the appellant's position meets just one condition, number 8, it is not credited and is assigned to Factor Level 6-1.

Factor Level 6-1 is credited for a total of 310 points.

Factor 1 - Program Scope & Effect	Level 1-1	175 points
Factor 2 - Organizational Setting	Level 2-1	100 points
Factor 3 - Supervisory & Managerial Authority Exercised	Level 3-2	450 points
Factor 4 - Personal Contacts	Level 4A-2	50 points
Factor 4 - Purpose of Contacts	Level 4B-2	75 points
Factor 5 - Difficulty of Typical Work Directed	Level 5-2	205 points
Factor 6 - Other Conditions	Level 6-1	310 points
Total		1365

The point total of 1365 falls within the point range (1355-1600) of the GS-07 grade level.

The appellant's primary line of work is aviation and fire management. He supervises a helicopter operations crew of wildland firefighters, and he directs activities of both crew and helicopter(s) in support of the fire management and resource management programs. He serves as the initial coordination point for managing the non-fire aviation program and is responsible for oversight,

direction, and expertise of the aviation program's natural resource activities. The appellant's non-supervisory duties, which are regular and recurring and consist of a minimum of 25% of his time, are separated from the supervisory duties and evaluated below.

### **Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technical Work in the Biological Sciences, GS-400:**

#### Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position

This factor measures the nature of knowledge and skills needed, and how they are used in doing the work.

The SPO has assigned Level 1-5, 750 points. We agree.

The appellant's non-supervisory duties primarily involve planning and coordination of the District's aviation program and various administrative functions involving the helicopter(s) and other contracts for aircraft for all resource management activities, including the fire program. His lists of typical projects for his non-fire aircraft use activities include wild horse censuses and roundups, water rights inventory, material's delivery and/or removal (bridges, fence materials, culverts, signs, wrecked cars, etc.), cattle trespass reconnaissance, GPS mapping, law enforcement investigations, search and rescue, aerial ignition for prescribed burns, riparian area inventory, aerial photography, fisheries, seeding and spraying. The variety of issues encountered for both fire and non-fire activities include the set up of reimbursable accounts, utilization of military aircraft, remote areas/long distances affecting logistical support and available personnel, differences between BLM and FS policies/procedures, short time frames for developing plans and completing projects, competitions for aircraft and personnel between project and fire operations, aircraft mechanical failures impacting time frames, resolving contract noncompliance, documentation of aircraft incidents or accidents, budget constraints.

The appellant also lists and describes several projects he feels are multi-phased having nonstandard technical problems. This involves projects to provide the fire program and resource management programs the most qualified and effective helicopter operations support. He describes his input into a program to provide water sources for helicopters engaged in fire suppression, training county and city firemen to work on the Bureau's helitack crew, investigation into the construction of an interagency helicopter operations base, assisting the FMO in updating the District's fire management plan; working on national level interagency committees for helicopter operations, and initiating a request, which continues to be researched, to determine the use of synthetic fiber rope for external cargo longline (policy does not allow for any other material than steel wire rope.)

The appellant describes work that overall is an equitable match overall to Factor Level 1-5. At this level, the employee uses knowledge of the technical methods and procedures related to the professional field(s) supported, of management practices, and of policy and programs to lay out, schedule, organize, and execute the detail of either: (1) a wide variety of type of limited operations projects incorporating diverse technical knowledge and/or one-at-a-time, often a long range multi phased projects with at least some nonstandard technical problems that must be

coordinated with others to resolve. Technicians at this level characteristically apply a practical knowledge of the basic theories and practices of the scientific discipline they support and must be adept at combining this knowledge with resourcefulness, initiative, and independent judgment in locating precedents and resolving the details.

Two illustrations listed in Factor Level 1-5 are very good matches to the appellant's description of his work. The first describes a technician who schedules and executes a variety of responsible projects related to range conservation programs. Examples include planning and organizing a project for minimizing range trespass, subsequently overseeing field action, preparing detailed reports, and serving as a witness in court. Technicians at this level develop preliminary plans for implementing grazing allotment improvements and overseeing the implementation. They work with permittees to prepare preliminary designs and plans for a variety of standardized projects; and they monitor the effectiveness of agency and contractor crews in performing a variety of precedented projects, ensuring the technical adequacy of the completed work.

The second illustration discusses technicians who manage ongoing wildlife management projects. They ensure timely and proper issuance of notification, adherence to bidding rules, and they issue permits. They monitor the activities to ensure that all regulations and contract specifications are adhered to and collect and organize a variety of administrative and technical data useful in preparing annual reports and work plans. They collect and maintain census data in the off season for use in planning for the next cycle and perform a variety of other seasonal support tasks.

The appellant's work exceeds Factor Level 1-4 because at this level, employees use limited processes, methods, and procedures associated with *aid* types of duties in performing a wide variety of either highly interrelated tasks or nonstandard assignments that have a full range of irregular or problem situations, or *technical* methods and procedures for a work area to employ them in carrying out a variety of duties common to the specialty area. At this level functions are limited. Employees count livestock and note such things as the proper location of salt rocks; notes and reports on utilization and grazing impacts; maps out key areas of use; notes erosion and other stream bank problems; inspects improvements and reports violations or needed maintenance, etc.

However, the appellant does not meet Factor Level 1-6. At this level, the employee uses knowledge of the technical methods and procedures, management practices, agency policies and programs, and an extensive familiarity with the methods and practices of sciences or disciplines supported. At this level, employees design, coordinate, and execute complete conventional projects that require the exercise of judgment based on critical analysis and evaluation of project objectives, past practices, source materials, alternative among available work processes, and recognition of intended uses of completed work. Illustrations at this level include technicians who manage precedented types of study projects. They adapt a plan for executing the study; resolve administrative concerns; collect, organize and summarize data and the extent of the data. They refine and justify the data. They prepare maps and other information for data base entry. They study the results and they generate conclusions or proposals.

Although the appellant as stated in his appeal, is involved in various projects having a variety of issues that may include multi-phased projects, there is no evidence that he is required to typically and continuously adapt plans in order to execute research, and then carry the assignment through to preparing conclusions and proposals. The various projects described by the appellant in his appeal are more typically found at Factor level 1-5.

Factor Level 1-5 is assigned for a total of 750 points.

### Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls

This factor measures how the work is assigned, the employee's responsibility in carrying out the work, and how the work is reviewed.

The SPO has assigned the highest level written for this guide, Factor Level 2-3. We agree.

At Factor Level 2-3, the supervisor or other designated authority initially provides direction on the priorities, objectives, and/or deadlines for types of work previously performed. New or unusual assignments may be accompanied with a general background discussion including advice on the location of reference material. Employees identify the work to be done, plans and carries out the steps required, seek assistance when needed, independently coordinates work efforts with outside parties; and typically submits only completed work. However, they will seek administrative direction or decision from higher authority when encountering significant technical or procedural problems. Review of the work is usually in the form of an assessment of how the employee resolved the technical and administrative problems. This description of Factor Level 2-3 compares favorably to the supervision description in the PD which states that the appellant's work is assigned in terms of broad objectives and time frames with instructions on new projects or major changes. The Aviation Manager is kept informed of helicopters related requests and projects and if the project is complex or of long duration, the Aviation Manager is directly involved. Priorities are determined in conjunction with the supervisory FMO and dispatch. The appellant plans and carries out his recurring work without detailed instruction. He often functions independently when in the field.

The appellant's level of supervisory controls exceeds Factor Level 2-2 in that at this level, the supervisor or higher graded employee makes continuing assignments by initially indicating the criteria required, providing additional specific instruction for new or more difficult or unusual assignments, not straightforward or repetitive. New assignments or that requiring special handling or guidance is checked in more detail than recurring and continuing assignments to insure accuracy and to make sure that special instructions have been carried out. The appellant has far more freedom from supervision than indicated at the level.

Factor Level 2-3 is assigned for a total of 275 points.

### Factor 3 - Guidelines

This factor measures the nature of guidelines for performing the work, and the judgment needed to apply them or develop new guides.

The SPO has assigned the highest level written for this guide, Factor Level 3-3. We agree.

At Factor Level 3-3 the employee works with new requirements or applications for which only general guidelines are available or with assigned having application guides that are limited to general functional statements or work samples that do not relate directly to the problem of the assignments, have gaps or are otherwise not completely applicable. The employee exercises independent judgment in applying the guides or extending their applicability. They use the guides to make procedural deviations from both established administrative and technical methods.

As described at Factor Level 3-3, the appellant monitors and analyzes situations, selected relevant guides, policies, procedures, and applies them appropriately. He utilizes guides to make plans; resolve conflicts, and integrates various guides to assist in the development of the District aviation plan.

Factor Level 3-2 is exceeded because at this level, the employee is limited to doing work with established and specific guidelines for which judgment is needed only to select the appropriate guide that may be difficult to find, but solves the core question or problem.

Factor Level 3-3 is assigned for a total of 275 points.

#### Factor 4 - Complexity

This factor measures the nature of the assignment, the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done, and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

The SPO has assigned the highest level written for this guide at Factor Level 4-3. We agree.

At Factor Level 4-3, the employee's work requires the performance of various technical duties involving differing and unrelated processes and methods. They frequently shift from one type of assignment to others that are substantially different in terms of equipment, techniques, and methods. There are a number of possible courses of action for planning as well as executing the work and the employee has the leeway and is expected to exercise discretion in choosing from among them. Precedented technical and procedural problems encountered in planning the work and executing assignments, and preparing them for submission is independently resolved, although there is some commonality with previously encountered problems. Judgment is required in applying a wide range of conventional, established approaches, methods, techniques and solution to new situations. The employee must identify and recommend resolution of discrepancies, adjust work methods to accommodate unusual conditions, and/or recommend or determine what date to use, record or report.

As with Factor Level 4-3, the appellant works with the variable nature of emergency fire incidents and resource management projects, aviation operations that require specialized training and experience, effect helicopter management that combine training, contract management, weather monitoring, fire behavior prediction, aircraft capabilities, determining strategy and

tactics, and tactical coordination. Activities range from one crew and helicopter doing project work or fire control to multiple agencies with numerous aircraft and fire fighting units. Although such activities are frequently performed independently due to the field conditions and remote location, fire suppression activities have commonalties with previously encountered problems.

The appellant's position exceeds Factor Level 4-2 because this level is performing a variety of routine procedural tasks or one or more complex duties related to regular and recurring technical work, and /or performing a full variety of standardized technical support and technical duties associated with the work.

Factor Level 4-3 is assigned for a total of 150 points.

#### Factor 5 - Scope and Effect

This factor measures the purpose of the work, and the impact of the work product or service.

The SPO has assigned the highest level written for this guide at Factor Level 5-3. We agree.

At Factor Level 5-3, the employee's work involves applying conventional technical and administrative solution and practices to a variety of problems. Major consideration for performing the work is to insure that established operations criteria, rules, or methods are adhered to. The work directly affects the operation of systems, programs, or systems; or the adequacy of such activities as long range work plans, field investigations, testing operations, or research conclusion.

The appellant's work supports the District's fire program by providing safe and effective availability of helicopters and supports personnel, and secondarily provides that same support for resource projects or personnel. This is an equitable match to Factor Level 5-3.

Factor Level 5-2 is exceeded because at this level, the work is limited to execution of specific rules, regulations, or procedures. The work product affects the accuracy, reliability, or acceptability of further procedures, processes or services.

Factor Level 5-3 is assigned for a total of 150 points.

#### Factor 6 - Personal Contacts and Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts

These two factors cover the people and conditions under which the contacts are made and the purpose of the contacts.

The SPO has assigned Factor Levels 6/2 and 7/b. We agree.

Factor Level 6-2 defines personal contacts as employees of the same agency, inside and outside the immediate organization, from higher level organizational units and occasionally resource personnel from State or local governments units, or other Federal agencies. Other personal work contact situations may be with the general public, contractor personnel, or special



users. Contacts are usually established on a routine basis although at times, authority of the parties may need to be established. This is an equitable match to the personal contacts as outlined in the PD. The appellant's contacts include a variety of fire crew personnel, contractors, personnel from other government agencies, and with a variety of resource managers and other Bureau personnel.

The appellant's personal contacts exceed Factor Level 6-1 because at this level, contacts are limited to Personnel from within the immediate work area or with members of the public in a very structured and controlled situation. However, the contacts fail to meet Factor Level 6-3. At this level, the appellant would have to have continuous non-routine contacts with a variety of subject matter experts from other Federal agencies, universities, private foundations and professional societies; influential local community leaders; newspaper, radio and television reporters; and legal representatives from special interest groups and property owners.

Factor Level 7-b defines the purpose of contacts to plan and coordinate work efforts, explain the need to adhere to laws, rules, contracts, or lease provisions, discuss inspected work and contract requirements when monitoring activity of contractors; etc. The contacts are usually working toward a common goal and generally are reasonably cooperative. Also at this level, some employees may be required to deliver information such as how data was obtained and their opinion as to its accuracy in court. The appellant's contacts are to provide instructions and information, briefings, coordinate and schedule activities, and receive instructions and is an equitable match to Factor Level 7-b.

The appellant's contacts exceed Factor Level 7-a which established contacts for the exchange of information about procedures, schedules, or operating problems; clarify information on records or report the results of studies; explain the reason the work is being performed; or other similar exchanges of factual information and may vary from easily understood to highly technical. However, the appellant's contacts do not meet Factor Level 7-c. At this level, the appellant would have to influence, motivate, interrogated, or control persons or groups who are characteristically fearful, skeptical, or uncooperative and skill must be used in the approach made to obtain desired results.

Factor Level 6-2/7-b is assigned for a total of 75 points.

#### Factor 8 - Physical Demands

This factor describes the nature of physical demands placed on the employee.

The SPO has assigned Factor Level 8-2. We agree.

Because the non-supervisory work of the position requires physical exertion Factor Level 8-2 is met. The work exceeds Factor Level 8-1 where work is sedentary though there may be some walking or bending, but does not require regular and protracted periods of considerable and strenuous physical exertion as required at Factor Level 8-3. Most of the appellant's strenuous

duties are in connection with his supervisory duties.

Factor Level 8-2 is assigned for a total of 20 points.

#### Factor 9 - Work Environment

This factor describes the physical surroundings in which the employee works.

The SPO has assigned Factor level 9-2. We agree.

The appellant's non-supervisory work involves regular and recurring moderate risks or discomforts and requires special safety precautions as is assigned to Factor Level 9-2. Factor Level 9-1 is exceeded because the work at this level is typically found in offices, meeting and training rooms, libraries, and residences or commercial vehicles. However, the work of the position does not meet Factor Level 9-3, which requires high risks, exposure to potentially dangerous situations or unusual environmental stress. Examples include working at great heights under extreme weather conditions, or working with dangerous toxins or pests or poisonous snakes where safety precautions cannot completely eliminate the danger. These types of risks are primarily in connection with the appellant's supervisory duties.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position	Level 1-5	750 points
Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls	Level 2-3	275 points
Factor 3 - Guidelines	Level 3-3	275 points
Factor 4 - Complexity	Level 4-3	150 points
Factor 5 - Scope and Effect	Level 5-3	150 points
Factor 6 - Personal Contacts	Level 6-2	-
Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts	Level 7-b	75 points
Factor 8 - Physical Demands	Level 8-2	20 points
Factor 9 - Work Environment	Level 9-2	20 points
	Total	1715

The point total of 1715 falls within the point range (1605-1850) of the GS-08 grade level.

#### **Conclusion:**

Evaluation of the non-supervisory duties performed by the appellant results in a GS-08 grade

level, and evaluation of the supervisory duties performed by the appellant results in a GS-07 grade level.

**Decision:** Supervisory Range Technician, GS-455-08.

Interviews conducted by Shirley A. Girard.

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Mark W. Whitesell  
Supervisory Personnel Management Specialist